

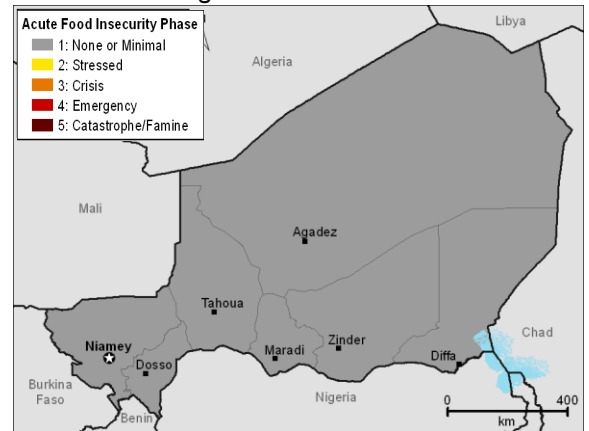
## NIGER Food Security Outlook Update

November 2011

### *Conditions continue to bolster household food consumption*

- The annual meeting of the national early warning system (SAP) identified 228 areas «vulnerable» to food insecurity. However, with food assistance needs having not been assessed during this meeting, vulnerable households will be targeted based on the findings by the national survey of vulnerability to food insecurity.
- With few exceptions, pasture production in all parts of the country is poor. Fodder reserves will not meet livestock feeding needs for as long as usual, particularly in the Tahoua and Tillabery regions.
- Markets are well-stocked, and even though prices are generally above the five-year average, they have not significantly affected household food access. At least 80 percent of households currently have adequate food resources from grain reserves, in-kind payments, cash crops, and the gathering of wild plant foods.

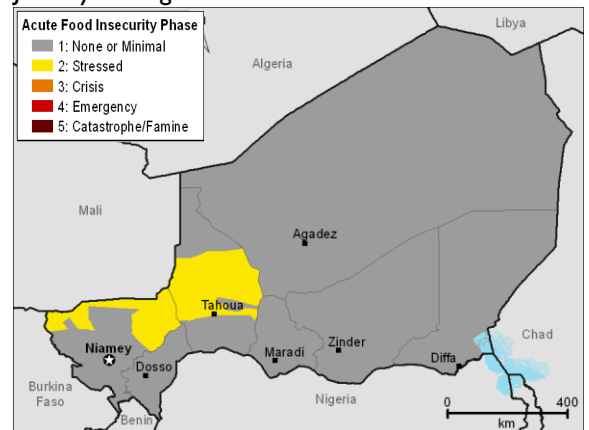
**Figure 1.** Estimated food security outcomes for November through December 2011



Source: FEWS NET

For more information on the IPC Acute Food Insecurity Reference Table, please see: [www.fews.net/FoodInsecurityScale](http://www.fews.net/FoodInsecurityScale)

**Figure 2.** Estimated food security outcomes for January through March 2012



Source: FEWS NET

### Updated food security outlook through March 2012

The SAP had a technical meeting to assess national vulnerability to food security. The meeting concluded that there are currently 228 areas vulnerable to food insecurity, compared with 164 at the same time last year. There is insufficient data available at this stage of the vulnerability assessment for the targeting of food-insecure population groups or an assessment of their needs. There is a joint national survey currently underway designed to provide a more detailed assessment of the vulnerability of households in these areas to food insecurity.

Essentially all available information at this stage concerns gross grain and forage balance sheet data and local income-earning opportunities. Other factors that need to be considered in assessing vulnerability in different areas include attacks by crop predators such as caterpillars and grasshoppers, particularly in the Maradi and Zinder regions, though the magnitude of their impact is generally in line with the norm, except in Aguié (in the Maradi region), where caterpillars caused major damage to early-maturing crops at the beginning of September, and in Filingué, Tillabery, and Téra where, according to ground observations and the opinion of experts, the grasshopper infestation happened to coincide with the most critical stages of crop growth and development.

The crises in Libya and Côte d'Ivoire are also considered as contributing factors to vulnerability. Thus, the home areas of returning migrants from Libya and Côte d'Ivoire have been identified as «vulnerable» under the assumption that there has

*This report is an update of the October 2011 FEWS NET Food Security Outlook assessing food security conditions for the period from October 2011 through March 2012.*

been no out-migration to Côte d'Ivoire this year and that most cash remittances from migrant workers in Libya had been used mainly to buy food and that, without these remittances, these households would be food-insecure. However, according to the travel agencies and carriers interviewed by FEWS NET, there is in fact an ongoing flow of migration to Côte d'Ivoire. Moreover, the findings by the FEWS NET survey of May/June 2011 on migration and migrant remittances showed that most households with the financial means to send household members to Libya were middle-income or better-off households with sufficient access to other sources of food and income to enable them to meet their basic needs even without migrant remittances. Furthermore, the cash remittances from Libya had been used mainly to fund purchases of productive assets. According to ground observations, most returnees from Libya are currently making good use of the equipment purchased with these funds (such as motorbike taxis, for example) or are migrating to other destinations (Côte d'Ivoire). These strategies are not negatively impacting their livelihoods and, at least for the time being, should suffice to meet their basic needs without their requiring emergency assistance.

The Ministry of Animal Husbandry has estimated available pasture resources for livestock based on ground data and interpretations of vegetation or so-called "greenness" maps. This year, there are a number of areas with mediocre fodder resources, particularly in pastoral areas, and sparse or bare pastures in grazing enclaves and on fallow lands in farming areas. All survey sites are showing mediocre pasture production and new pasture growth at certain sites is expected to be well under 300 kilograms of dry matter per hectare. The forage balance sheet shows a deficit of over 10.22 billion kg of dry matter, the equivalent of half the national herd in terms of tropical livestock units. The Tillabery, Tahoua, and Zinder regions are showing the largest deficits. This year's poor pasture production will make it impossible to build up large enough reserves to sustain livestock and keep them in good physical condition. This will drive up the cost of needed supplies of fodder for the fattening of cattle by pastoralist households and livestock maintenance costs in general, especially as of February/March. Most seasonal lakes and ponds were full by the end of the rainy season, which helped put any available pasture to good use.

A review of the food security situation as of November of this year showed adequate supplies and household access to crops in all parts of the country. These favorable conditions are largely a result of the positive effects of this year's good harvests of different types of crops, cash crops in particular, and of last year's grain surplus. Moreover, in spite of the shortfall in grain production, preliminary food balance sheet data indicate good food security conditions in all parts of the country. However, the reported grain and pasture deficits in certain areas and, in particular, in most agropastoral areas of the Tillabery region, will begin to create food gaps as of January of this coming year, leading to a sharp deterioration in conditions in March/April, particularly if the current upward trend in prices for staple commodities continues.

According to preliminary data compiled by the Ministry of Health, admissions figures for children suffering from global acute malnutrition are above average in all parts of the country. This could be attributable to the opening of new therapeutic feeding centers, a better supply of services, and better-than-average reporting rates. Most regions reported a decline in admissions between September and October, which is normal for that time of year. The situation warrants close monitoring, but is not yet indicative of the beginnings of a food crisis for the following reasons:

- The delay in the start of this year's harvesting period put the height of the lean season in September instead of in August, as is normally the case in an average year.
- The peak season for diseases such as malaria is oftentimes marked by a jump in admissions figures for children suffering from acute malnutrition. The extended rainy season may have pushed the height of these outbreaks into September, from August.
- Farmwork and pressure from the observance of Ramadan put heavier-than-usual demands on women's time in August, which may have prevented them from seeking nutritional assistance in that month, thereby heightening nutritional assistance needs in September.
- Trends in admissions figures are not necessarily a reflection of trends in the prevalence of malnutrition.

FEWS NET is expecting near-average numbers of admissions of children suffering from acute malnutrition in general, with above-average admissions rates in central and northern Tillabery and pastoral areas of Tahoua.

Grain prices are still high on most markets across the country. November prices for millet topped the five-year average for the same time of year by five percent in Bakin Birdji (Tanout) and 30 percent in Tahoua. Prices on markets in grain-deficit

areas of Niger are always higher than on markets in surplus areas. The current high price of grain could be attributable to low market supplies. In fact, the volume of millet supplies from farmers is relatively small compared with supplies of cowpea crops due to the large harvests and lucrative prices of these latter crops, particularly on major assembly and wholesale markets in Maradi and Zinder. In general, demand is stable and limited mostly to normal demand from urban and pastoralist households and households in grain-short areas, with very little demand emanating from farm families with the use of crops from recent harvests for on-farm consumption. This is true even in areas with poor, but at least some, grain harvests.

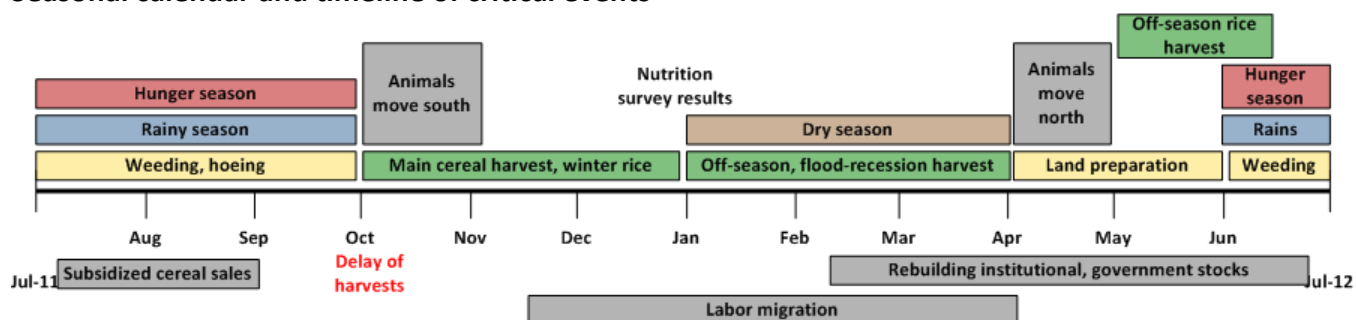
In general, business was brisk on livestock markets in October, which were reporting improvements in both supply and demand during the holiday period. Most sales involved sheep, particularly male sheep for the observance of Tabaski. Average prices for all categories of sheep and goats were 26 to 50 percent higher than at the same time last year due to the good physical condition of livestock and a growing demand engendered, in part, by foreign exporters, but mostly by the celebration of the Feast of Tabaski, which is a period of strong price speculation.

### Filingué, Tillabery, and Téra departments

Market supplies are still able to meet demand. The above-average price of millet is due mainly to speculation by traders already anticipating an important role for markets in supplying grain-deficit areas.

These areas lie in the region of the country facing the largest crop production shortfall, as well as shortfalls in pasture production in grazing enclaves. Thanks to food supplies from carry-over grain inventories and this year’s grain harvests (even if below average), these crop and pasture production shortfalls are not yet translating into household food consumption gaps. Even in the next three months (January/February/March), sufficient income from wage labor in irrigated rice-farming areas, urban areas, and gold mining sites to meet basic food and non-food needs could limit the severity of the deterioration in food security conditions to IPC Phase 2 (stressed). However, by April 2012 (in other words, two to three months earlier than usual), food reserves will be entirely depleted and there will be less income coming in with the conclusion of crop maintenance work in irrigated rice-growing operations and the end of the rush to gold mining sites and large urban areas. At the same time, the depletion of remaining supplies of cowpeas and straw with this year’s production shortfalls in these areas will translate into a loss of sales income. Rising levels of food insecurity with the projected rise in prices, decline in household income, and growing consumer demand with the return of migrant workers could put area households in IPC Phase 3 (crisis) by April/May.

### Seasonal calendar and timeline of critical events



Source: FEWS NET